

## Self-correcting reading behaviors can be enhanced with effective use of “simple” technology

*Stephanie St. John, winner of IRA's reading and technology award, helped her students improve ability to self-monitor*

**N**ot every classroom teacher or reading specialist in America has the latest technology to help improve reading instruction, help English-language learners, or reach struggling readers. And sometimes the latest techno-wizardry isn't what's needed anyway.

Stephanie St. John, the Plains states winner of the International Reading Association Presidential Award for Reading and Technology 2008, realized that. Her project involved videotaping second- and third-grade students reading individually and then watching the tapes as a group while analyzing and discussing the segments.

“I chose to do this project specifically because it was something I could accomplish with very little extra resources not already in our school—things that could be found in most classrooms I'd imagine,” she said.

“My students were struggling with self-correcting and self-monitoring as they read so I needed a way to help them notice how they were reading,” St. John explained. “The tape recorders and video camera really helped them to both see

and hear how they were reading and what errors they were making as they read. I also then had a reference to use to remind them to read carefully if they started slipping into old habits.”

At the time she won the award, St. John was the Title I reading teacher at Washington Elementary School in Liberal, Kansas. Liberal is a town of about 20,000 people in southwestern Kansas, where the chief employer is a beef-processing plant.

About 45% of the population is Hispanic, and St. John's students were primarily Hispanic, learning English as a second language. Spanish is the primary language spoken at home, though most of her students were not fluent in written Spanish, she said, and 95% of the student population qualified for free or reduced lunch.

Though St. John had a basic knowledge of Spanish and was able to help give her students directions, she “enlisted helpful bilingual students to help translate for me.”

St. John initially videotaped herself reading a book that was at the same level her students were reading so the text

would be accessible to them. She then videotaped each student reading a book they had read together as a group in a previous lesson. She compiled the tapes and created a checklist so students could note the “good and bad spots” in their videos.

St. John and her students continued the process, performing the same viewing, recording, analyzing, and discussing activities while watching a video of each student in the group. She said, “With each student's video, the discussions got better and more useful to the student who was reading on the video.... By the end of watching the videos, [they] all had a much clearer goal to work toward when they read.”

To wrap up the unit, St. John once more recorded each student, reading a book. She said each compared how many errors were made compared to how many were made in the first video. “They were so impressed by their progress! I intend to use this series of lessons again...as this proved incredibly powerful with my students.”

Since winning the award, St. John has moved to Sitka, in southeast Alaska,

where she is “enjoying a new culture, different lifestyle, and loving the outdoor opportunities here!” She is now a third-grade teacher at Keet Gooshi Heen Elementary and realizes that it would be difficult to incorporate her project “when you have an entire classroom to instruct.”

“I was the Title I reading teacher so I ran a pull-out program to help the lowest readers in K–3. I was fortunate enough to be able to only have 3–5 students with me at a time making this videotaping and audiotaping easy to manage. I would love to use the strategy with some of my third graders,” St. John said, “however, the need for those specific lessons [self-monitoring/self-correcting] is not quite as high with my kids I've got now. This district uses Reading Recovery in first grade and also has a pull-out reading intervention for second to fifth-graders similar to what my role was the past few years. They follow a specific reading intervention program as well or I'd suggest the idea to our reading specialists.”

“We'll see....” ♦



Newark, DE

### Executive Director

**T**he International Reading Association (IRA) has retained Witt/Kieffer, an executive search firm specializing in senior leadership positions in higher education, non-profit organizations and healthcare, to support them in their efforts to identify a new Executive Director.

The International Reading Association is a nonprofit, professional association of individuals and groups dedicated to the advancement of literacy worldwide. With corporate offices in Newark, Delaware and Washington, DC, IRA has approximately 85,000 members and an annual operating budget of US\$20M. Founded in 1956, IRA's mission is to promote reading by continuously advancing the quality of literacy instruction and research worldwide.

The new Executive Director will have the unique opportunity to lead the largest professional association in education at a time when the Board seeks to increase membership, expand its international presence, and increase diversity at all levels of the organization. The Executive Director will be expected to partner with the Board to develop a new strategic course that will ensure IRA's continued pre-eminent standing internationally, and at the national, state, and local levels.

We are seeking a leader with the ability to work collaboratively and to communicate effectively to a wide range of individuals. An earned doctorate in reading, literacy, closely related field or equivalent experience is required. Candidates must have a minimum of 5 years of successful management experience at a senior level with significant fiscal and people management responsibility. He/she must be a person of consummate skill and have substantial knowledge of the reading and literacy field, an ability to predict trends and make projections in the field of reading and in a national and international business environment. Demonstrated political acumen and a high level of enthusiasm, energy, and interpersonal skills are key ingredients for success.

Applicants should submit a current resume and a thoughtful application letter, expressing interest in the opportunity. All items associated with the search should be sent electronically to: [IRAExecDir@wittkieffer.com](mailto:IRAExecDir@wittkieffer.com). Documents that must be mailed may be sent to Oliver B. Tomlin or Jennifer Bauer at Witt/Kieffer, 7201 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 675, Bethesda, MD, 20814.

More information about the IRA may be found at its Web site: [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org).

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